

Umno lacking in use of social media to reach masses, says Zahid
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Umno needs to evaluate its weakness in the use of social media to win the hearts and minds of the people, Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said.

The deputy prime minister and Umno vice-president said, in politics today there was an illness that spread from fingertips, and no longer from the mouth, referring to the use of social media to spread untruths and slander.

He said information was no longer spread only through conventional media, but also via social media and online news portals.

"It is also coming from fingertips. Things that are not true are planned, and repeated many times to captivate the people," he said, citing the approach used by Hitler's propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels during the Nazi regime.

"Lies are repeated many times so the people will believe them.

"The problems and crises are not what they are, but inventions and slander from the mouth and fingertips," Zahid said, adding that the government cannot just rely on laws to curb such acts because the perpetrators could find ways around it.

"We can use government enforcement agencies, laws, and firewalls to block access to a portal, but they can still find ways to get around it," he said, in an apparent reference to whistleblower site Sarawak Report.

"The laws are only tools but what is important is the mind and thinking of the people. We have to do some self-criticism because we are lacking in using social media to win the minds of the people."

Zahid said Barisan Nasional (BN) still relied on conventional ways to reach out to the people and fight with its rivals, compared with the opposition that was taking advantage of social media.

"The opposition monitors every word and action by Umno and other BN parties. They won't be looking for positive things but will find out faults or make up things to make us appear stupid, backward and irrelevant.

"That is why we lost seats in states and Parliament," he said when launching the Bayan Baru Umno division's delegates meeting at Hotel Equatorial Penang this morning.

The Umno vice-president and home minister said Umno has to embrace the wave of technological advances if it wants to survive in politics.

He said the party must not be trapped by slander spread from mouth to mouth or from fingertips.

He pointed out that outside Malaysia, there were governments that fell and were replaced due to "fitnah di hujung jari" (slander at fingertips), and there were also external forces funding such efforts to "divide and rule" the countries.

Zahid said the party was dealing with Generation Y and Generation Z that will come later, which are generations that are familiar with smart gadgets and communication technology from a young age, and think differently from the old generation.

He said Umno also has to stop complacency and infighting in the party, and change its approach to move forward.

"It is not that we do not have people with the skills and knowledge to work with the social media. It is just that we use it to fight amongst ourselves. That has to stopped."

Earlier, Bayan Baru Umno division chairman Datuk Mansor Musa said Umno was facing tough times and he had advised all branch and wing leaders not to fan the flames.

"Even Muhyiddin 'relaks saja' (is calm about it) and has pledged to continue working for the party. So there is no reason for anyone to 'cucuk sini sana' (instigate)," he said, referring to the sacking of Umno deputy president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin as deputy prime minister earlier this week.

Mansor also said Umno these days lacked the "wow factor" and his division was working hard to get support from voters in the parliamentary constituency for BN in the coming polls. – August 2, 2015.

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